

Susanna Brittain



A
S E R M O N

OCCASIONED BY THE DECEASE OF
MRS. SUSANNA BRITTAIN,
LATE WIFE OF
THE REV. MR. JOHN BRITTAIN.



[Price SIX-PENCE.]



The Christian aspiring to Heaven.

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P R E A C H E D

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2 C O R. V. 8.

We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

IT has been remarked of the Apostle Paul, that when he speaks in his epistles of the happiness of heaven, he most commonly chooses to describe it in its last and perfect state. Passing over the scene that immediately succeeds death, he leads our views forward to the great day of the resurrection, when the souls and bodies of the saints shall be reunited, and made for ever happy and glorious in the presence and fruition of God. And his reason for so doing may be, not only because this last state is most perfect, and he could describe it in terms more easy to be understood, and more striking to the imagination, than the

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other;

other ; but because the renovation of the body was a consideration peculiarly adapted to comfort the primitive Christians, who suffered so much in their persons and outward circumstances for the sake of religion. They “ who were troubled on every side,” as it is expressed in the preceding chapter, “ who were perplexed, persecuted, cast down, and who always bore about in their bodies the dying of the Lord Jesus ;” persons who had their relish thus spoiled for all worldly enjoyments, could not but rejoice in the assurance, that their bodies should another day be raised from the grave, and be fashioned like unto the glorious body of Jesus, and that their souls reunited to their bodies should be made happy with him for ever.

But it has been questioned whether the Apostle has, in this chapter, any view to the last resurrection at all. Possibly he might, when in the 4th verse he speaks of “ mortality being swallowed up of life.” Nor is it improbable that he had some respect to it, when in the 1st verse he says, “ we have a building of God ;” and in the 2d,
“ we

“ we desire to be clothed upon with our
 “ house, which is from heaven.” But the
 language of the text is evidently restricted
 to the intermediate state, that condition of
 the saints which follows immediately upon
 death. For, having spoke of their being
 formed by a divine influence into a temper
 suited to the heavenly state, and of their
 feelings with respect to their present con-
 dition, that it was no way comparable to
 that, but rather disagreeable and unhappy ;
 he adds—“ We are confident, and willing
 “ rather to be absent from the body, and to
 “ present with the Lord.”

“ We are confident ”—bold and couragi-
 ous amidst the sufferings and persecutions
 we endure ; and are become so through a
 persuasion that, as on the one hand, whilst
 we are at home (or are sojourners) in the
 body, we are absent from the Lord ; so,
 on the other, that when we are absent from
 the body, we shall be present with the
 Lord. The consideration of our present
 state, that it is that of pilgrims and
 strangers, of persons on a journey, and at
 a distance from their native country ; for-

bids our being surprized or shocked at the evils we suffer. And the prospect of the happiness that is before us, when we shall arrive at our long expected home, adds joy and triumph to our composure and resolution.

Or, this *Confidence* may refer to the grounds of their faith as to a future state of happiness, and of their assurance that they were themselves entitled to it. For the Apostle had been speaking in the context of both the one and the other. “ We know “ that we have a building of God,” ver. 1. And, “ he that hath wrought us for the “ self-same thing, is God, who also hath “ given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.” ver. 5. And he immediately adds, ver. 6. (to which he also seems to refer in the text) “ Therefore we are always confident.”

“ We are willing,” he proceeds; or as the word might be rendered, “ we are well “ pleased *.”—We not only acquiesce in death, but we feel a complacency and satisfaction in the contemplation of it. For, though to pass out of the body, to be dismissed from

* εὐδοκίαν

it, as the sojourner is from the tent, or inn, where he is for a time lodged and entertained; though this, on some accounts, is a disagreeable painful circumstance: yet the being present with the Lord, which shall be the immediate consequence of absence from the body, the prospect of this more than balances all the pain we feel from the reluctance of nature to death. Nay, absence from the body, considering the many inconveniencies and troubles we are exposed to, whilst sojourning in this tent or tabernacle, (and which he had before adverted to) is itself, on these accounts, desirable.

In short, the sense of the words is this:
 “ We have a firm persuasion, that when
 “ our immortal spirits are by death dis-
 “ missed from the body, we shall be in-
 “ stantly present with the Lord. And this
 “ persuasion, founded upon the most
 “ sure and rational grounds, not only re-
 “ conciles us to death, but excites in us an
 “ eager desire of death, and makes us bold
 “ and courageous amidst all the persecu-
 “ tions and sufferings we endure in our
 “ way to it.”

Now

Now I propose in further discoursing of these words to consider,

I. The happiness which good men have in prospect ;

II. The period at which it will commence ;

III. The grounds on which their faith and hope are built ; and,

IV. The blessed effect which this confidence may, and ought to have upon their temper and conduct.

I. Let us take a view of the happiness which good men have in prospect.—

“ They are willing to be absent from the
“ body, as they expect then to be present
“ with the Lord.”

FIRST, “ They are willing to be absent
“ from the body.” Now this phrase has a manifest respect to that other in the 6th verse, where the Apostle speaks of our being
“ at home in the body,” which, I think, ought rather to have been rendered “ so-
“ journing in the body *,” and which is a quite opposite idea to that of being “ at

* ἐνδημῶντες ἐν τῷ σώματι.

“home in it.” So that the body is the tent or tabernacle, in which the soul, for awhile, resides. And from this figurative account of our present mode of existence it may be very justly inferred—that the soul is of a nature distinct from the body—that it is more noble and excellent than the body—that the union between the one and the other is but of short duration—and that the former is capable of existing separate from the latter. But I must not insist on these particulars,

Death is a departure of the soul out of the body, the place of its present residence. And it must be acknowledged, that the convenience or suitableness of the tent to the guest that inhabits it, renders the idea of a departure out of it disagreeable and painful. So intimate and pleasing is the union established between soul and body, that nature cannot but feel a reluctance to the dissolution. And that reluctance is heightened in the generality of mankind, by their undue and sinful attachments to sense, by the guilt they daily contract upon their consciences, and by their miserable apprehen-

sions of the consequences of death. No wonder that the traveller, who is become immoderately fond of the inn at which he puts up for a little refreshment on his journey, and who conceives the most perilous consequences to be likely to ensue immediately upon his quitting it; no wonder, I say, that he should linger therein from day to day, unwilling and afraid to leave it.

But absence from the body, especially under certain circumstances, is far from exciting in the breast of the Christian a painful idea. Not that religion eradicates the feelings of nature, and makes men totally indifferent to the present life. The primitive Christians themselves, mortified as they were to the world, had still their attachment to it: and, assured as they were of future happiness, they could not but wish to be excused passing through the dark valley that leads to it. “ We groan being burthened, not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon.” — But then, when we come to consider the blessed prospects which a Christian of strong faith
and

and lively hope possesses; and when we add to this his growing indifference to the world, and some extraordinary circumstances which may happen to him to render his continuance in the body disagreeable; we shall see that the idea of absence from the body must, in regard of him, be rather chearful and enlivening, than irksome and sorrowful. As to the prospects he has before him, we shall treat of them by and by. — Let us here inquire what circumstances do or may attend the connexion between soul and body, which serve to reconcile the good man to death, if not to inspire him with an earnest desire of it. And here I shall remind you,

1st. Of the pains and disorders to which the body is liable, and their influence upon the mind. This is a consideration which affects all sorts of persons, whatever be their religious character. Acute diseases, such as the burning fever, the racking stone, the labouring asthma, and the wasting consumption, naturally make men weary of life, and groan to be delivered from it, as from an intolerable burden:

And chronical diseases are often very grievous to be borne, though they operate differently from those just mentioned, gradually mining the foundation of the house, instead of instantly destroying it by open and violent assault. The effects of both these kinds of diseases upon the mind, are too numerous to be particularly described; or I might tell you how they cloud the imagination and fancy, obstruct the progress of thought and reflexion, enfeeble the powers of reason, and miserably disturb and irritate the passions. Languor and fainting, deep oppression of the spirits, throbbings of the heart, gloominess and melancholy, yea, horror and consternation, are all the sad offspring of bodily distempers. And these sad sensations render men incapable of relishing the comforts of life, enjoying the pleasures of society, and discharging the proper duties of their station. No wonder then that the good man especially, who has been used to delight in meditation, reading and prayer, and in the pleasant offices of friendship and charity; should earnestly wish for his final deliverance from the body. — But what has the

main influence to excite his most ardent wishes to be released from it, is the consideration,

2dly. That the body is the occasion of much sin. This, indeed, is little adverted to by the generality of mankind. Reconciled to the tyranny of their appetites and passions, they feel scarce any pain on account of the many temptations to sin, with which they are continually assailed. But the real Christian with his mind serves the law of God, and therefore every occasion of his violating that law must be a source of anxiety and pain to his mind. Now the body, in various ways, becomes the occasion of sin. The senses are the medium by which all external temptations to sin gain access to the heart. By these the gaiety and splendor of the world, with all that is alluring in the whole circle of nature, are presented to the imagination. So the appetites of the body are excited and inflamed; and “when lust hath conceived,” as the Apostle James expresses it, “it bringeth forth sin*”—the hands carry into practice the evil inclinations of

* James i. 15.

the heart. Hence we read of “ the body
 “ of sin,” and “ the lusts that war in the
 “ members.” Now the consideration of
 all this sensibly afflicts the Christian, and
 makes him frequently groan for deliverance.
 “ Ah! how does this body check the aspi-
 “ rations of my soul to God, drag me
 “ down to earth, and chain me fast to
 “ sense! How is my immortal spirit, my
 “ nobler part, my renewed nature, wearied,
 “ oppressed and borne down with these
 “ sinful appetites and affections! O wretch-
 “ ed man that I am, who shall deliver me
 “ from the body of this death!”

But, when the soul is released from the
 body, it is freed from all these complaints.
 Its operations are no longer obstructed by
 bodily pains and disorders; and it is no
 longer solicited to sin by its connexion with
 sensible objects. The prison-walls are
 broke down, and the captive spirit is set
 at liberty. Well may the Christian then
 wish to be absent from the body!—But
 let us turn our eyes now from these lesser
 considerations, to others infinitely more in-
 teresting and important, I mean,

SECONDLY,

SECONDLY, The bright and glorious prospects he has before him. These are happily expressed by the phrase of his “being present with the Lord.”

By the *Lord* the Apostle without doubt means our Saviour Jesus Christ: and by “being present with him,” the immediate vision and fruition of him in heaven. Much after the same manner he expresses himself in his epistle to the Philippians, “I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ*.” And to the Thessalonians; “So shall we ever be with the Lord †.” In this last passage, indeed, he is speaking of the final condition of the saints after the resurrection of the body; whereas in that other to the Philippians, and in the words of the text, his views are manifestly confined to the separate state. In discoursing therefore of that state, I shall briefly inquire — What the saints shall be upon their dismission from the body? — Where they shall be? — With whom they shall be? — And how long they shall continue in this blissful state?

* Philip. i. 23.

† 1 Thes. iv. 17.

1st. If it be inquired, What the saints shall be? I answer, such a change will pass on the soul, at the instant it quits the body, as will perfectly fit and qualify it for contemplating, serving and enjoying God. They who have any acquaintance with themselves, must be sensible of the ignorance, weakness and impurity of their minds in the present state; and consequently, of the affliction and sorrow to which they are on these accounts continually liable. But at death every complaint of this sort will be at an end. The immortal spirit, having made its escape from the body, that dark mansion where it so long lay fettered and bound, its faculties enervated and broken, and its affections debased and sensualized; having, I say, made its escape, it will instantly feel itself that pure, perfect, active, chearful Being, it was originally designed to be. The powers of the soul will be all strengthened and enlarged, so as to be capable of framing just ideas of every object presented to the mind, and of reasoning about them without any liableness to err and mistake. And the tendencies and affections of the heart will

will be all refined from the gross impurities of sense; so that the conscience will be the seat of the purest and most exalted pleasures. O what amazing light will then break in upon the understanding, and chase away the thick mists of ignorance, prejudice and error that hung about the soul! O what a pleasing and unalterable bias shall the will then receive to every thing that is holy and good; and so for ever extirpate from the conscious breast all doubt, fear, guilt, shame and sorrow! O what peace, love and joy shall circulate around the heart; and so render obedience to the will of God, and all the active services of the heavenly state, not only easy, but infinitely pleasant and delightful! Thus changed and made perfect, the soul will be fitted for contemplating the infinite attributes of God, for admiring and adoring his transcendent excellencies displayed in all his works, and for enjoying the rapturous pleasures of devotion in their highest perfection. In short, it will be as happy as it is possible for the human mind to be.

Whether

Whether there be some material vehicle or covering provided for the soul, in which it will subsist and act until the day of the resurrection, is a question too curious to be discussed here. Something of this kind, it has been conjectured, the Apostle had in his eye, when in this context he speaks of “a building of God,” and of “being clothed upon with our house which is from heaven.” But, as the scriptures have given us no certain information upon this point, it is enough for us to know, that the soul is capable of existing in a state separate from the body; and that in that state, whether there be or be not a mansion prepared for its residence, it will be in a capacity to exercise all its faculties in a manner far more satisfactory to itself than at present. — And so I am led to inquire,

2dly. Where the spirits of just men, thus made perfect, shall be? Nor do I mean here to entertain you with philosophical speculations concerning the relation which spirits bear to place and motion; however such speculations may seem to be justified
by

by the phrases in our text of “ being absent
 “ from the body and present with the
 “ Lord.” That there is a local heaven is
 not to be questioned, since we are assured
 that our Saviour, and Enoch, and Elijah,
 when they departed hence, carried their
 bodies with them : but where that heaven
 is, is a vain and fruitless inquiry. As to
 departed spirits, if new vehicles are pro-
 vided for their reception, as some have con-
 jectured ; we may with strict propriety ap-
 ply to them that sort of language which
 belongs to bodies, and speak of their re-
 sidence in a certain fixed place, and of their
 motion from one point to another. But, if
 we suppose that the soul at death exists per-
 fectly separate from matter ; then we mean
 by its being absent from the body, that it
 hath no longer any connexion with it, does
 not act upon it, is not conscious of what
 passes in it, and holds no converse with the
 material world by the aid of its organs or
 senses. And by its being present with the
 blessed God, and other happy spirits, we
 mean its exercising all the faculties proper
 to the mind, such as perceiving, judging,
 willing, and the like, after a more perfect

manner than it did formerly, and wholly free from those restraints and embarrassments which were the result of connexion with the body. So that, to speak properly, the good man does not at death ascend on high or move to a remote distance; but, the shell dropping, he finds himself instantly in heaven. As Gideon's lamps, when the pitchers wherein they had been concealed were broken, suddenly darted out their light, to the astonishment of the Midianitish host; so the immortal spirit, when this vessel of clay wherein it had been held is dissolved, suddenly flames up amidst myriads of kindred spirits, to its own and their infinite admiration and joy.

But, dismissing these inquiries, as more curious than profitable, I shall content myself with replying to the question, Where the saints shall be? in language better suited to our present modes of conception about these things, and which the scriptures most commonly use when treating of these subjects. At death, then, the Christian shall find himself in a different kind of world from this, where imperfection, vani-

ty and change, are written upon every object he is conversant with, where sense prevails over reason and religion, and where sin and Satan have so mighty and general an influence. He shall lift up his eyes in heaven, in the heaven of heavens, in the third heavens, in paradise, in the immediate presence of God himself. To give a just description of that world is impossible, as we have none of us been there. The great Apostle, indeed, was caught up thither, but whether in the body, or out of the body, he could not tell, nor was it lawful for him to utter the words he there heard *. Of this, however, we may be assured, that if this terrestrial globe with all its appendages be so glorious, if the sun, moon and stars furnish such illustrious proofs of the power and greatness of God, and if even the meanest part of the creation is capable of affording such entertainment to a curious mind; heaven surely must be infinitely more glorious, as God there makes the fullest and most perfect display of his transcendent excellencies. All our notions of splendor and glory, taken from what we are conversant with among men, vanish

* 2 Cor. xii. 2—4.

away even at the distant prospect which faith gives us of that world. What is the palace of the greatest monarch on earth, when compared with that building of God, that house not made with hands, in which the King of Kings resides, and hath prepared mansions for every one of his numerous family! What are the cities most renowned in history for their grandeur and magnificence, when compared with the New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven, whose streets are gold, its gates pearl, and its foundations garnished with precious stones! What are the kingdoms of this world, those of them which are most famous for their wealth and opulence, and every thing that can make a people great and happy, when compared with that kingdom which Christ hath obtained for his church, at the expence of his blood! Yea, how dark and how trifling a spot is this earth itself, when compared with those bright and immeasurable regions above, which are ever irradiated by the great Sun of Righteousness in all his glory? — But it will be further inquired,

3dly. With whom these happy spirits will be? To which the answer is, not with ignorant, weak and sinful men — men subject to innumerable follies, and to various hurtful passions; not with the wicked and profane, nor with hypocrites and deceivers, no nor with Christians themselves in their present imperfect, doubtful and afflicted state. In this world there is but little agreeable society; but one here and there that a good man would choose freely to converse with, or that he can thoroughly confide in. Nay, the pleasures of friendship, when they approach the nearest to perfection, are attended with their allays. On which accounts, as well as others, weary of the world we are sometimes ready to say with Job, “ We loathe it, “ we would not live always.” But in heaven there is the most amiable, improving and delightful company. There we shall join “ the general assembly and “ church of the first-born, an innumerable company of angels, and the spirits “ of just men made perfect* :” a society composed of persons most wise, holy and

* Heb. xii. 22, 23.

happy ;

happy; all of one mind and one heart; and who all possess every imaginable excellence to recommend them to one another's esteem and affection. Their pure hearts are united by the soft, but inseparable, bands of divine love. They enter deeply into each others views, sentiments and affections; and are mutually ravished with each others sweet and entertaining discourse. Subjects of the highest importance employ their attention, and excite in their breasts the noblest passions. And their devout feelings they express in songs of infinite praise to Him that sitteth on the throne, and the Lamb for ever; nor is one jarring note to be heard through the heavenly choir. All is peace, and joy, and love there. O glorious company! consisting of Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles and Martyrs; men of God, who stand distinguished on divine record for their faith, piety and love, and whose fair examples have charmed our hearts, and provoked our imitation. How great the felicity! to see and converse with Abraham the Father of the faithful, with Moses the Lawgiver of the Jewish Church, with David the sweet singer of Israel, with
the

the great Apostle of the Gentiles, and with the rest of the saints who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. How unspeakable the bliss! to join again our dear friends and relatives whom we tenderly loved, and would have fain detained here on earth, but who got the start of us, and arrived at that happy world before us — to join, I say, their company, to be admitted to their embraces, to enjoy the most intimate and unreserved fellowship with them, and to partake largely, even to the utmost of our wishes, of their temper and their joys. This must be happiness, pure and exalted happiness indeed! What devout soul, with these bright prospects before him, would not wish to be absent from the body — would not hail the happy moment that shall dissolve all his connexions here on earth, and give him a seat among this blessed assembly above?

But it is “the being present with the Lord,” that hath the chief effect to reconcile a good man to death. A prospect this
so

so transporting, that it perfectly obliterates, when beheld by a steady faith, every idea of death that is sad and gloomy. Our Lord Jesus Christ is “ the only begotten
 “ Son of God; the brightness of his
 “ Father’s glory, and the express image
 “ of his person.” In compassion to poor, lost, perishing sinners, he came down from heaven, became a man, “ was made flesh,
 “ and dwelt among us ;” and, having offered himself a sacrifice to divine justice upon the cross, arose from the dead, and ascended triumphantly up into heaven, where he continues until the restitution of all things. Now, as he is “ one with the
 “ Father*,” and no less than “ the true
 “ God and eternal life†;” to be present with him, is to be present with God. And what is this but to see God, to be conformed to his likeness, to be united to him, and to enjoy perfect satisfaction in a sense of his favour, and in the most intimate communion with him for ever? But, it is in his mediatorial capacity the Apostle here considers him. In our nature he ascended up into heaven, and there lives and reigns as Lord of all worlds. And O

* John x. 30.

† 1 John v. 20.

who can describe the transcendent beauty, majesty, and glory which distinguish his countenance from the myriads of pure and perfect spirits which inhabit those blissful regions! How different his appearance from what it was when here on earth! His body was then torn and mangled by Jews and Romans; but is now arrayed in garments white as snow, with a “name written thereon, King of Kings, and “Lord of Lords *.” His hands were then ignominiously fastened to a cross; but they now sway a sceptre of irresistible authority over the universe. His head was then pierced with cruel thorns; but it is now adorned with a diadem of matchless splendor and glory. “He was crucified through “weakness; but he now lives by the “power of God †.”

Now, to be present with Christ in this his exalted state, is, as he himself expresses it, “to behold his glory ‡,” to see him face to face, to survey his personal and relative excellencies, to contemplate the wonders of his dying love, and to be witnesses of the triumphs of his power and grace. To be

* Rev. xix. 16. † 2 Cor. xiii. 4. ‡ John xvii. 24.

present with him, is to be admitted into his company, to hear ourselves the gracious words that proceed from his lips, and to receive immediately from himself, the infinitely joyful and satisfying assurances of our interest in his favour. It is so to converse with him, as to be assimilated to his likeness, and to be changed from glory to glory; to be united to him by the firmest bands of friendship and affection, and after a more perfect manner than any union subsists among men. The language of the text very strikingly illustrates what I mean: for it intimates that the union between Christ and the spirits of just men made perfect, is as intimate and endearing as that between soul and body. “ Absent
 “ from the body, and present with the
 “ Lord;” so present with him as the soul, whilst it animates the body, is present with it: and every one’s reflexions and sensations will convince him, that this connexion, this union, is of all others, in nature the strongest, and the most pungent and affecting. Nor can I forbear here reciting those amazing words of our Saviour, which he uttered in his last prayer to his Father, a

little before his sufferings : words, the full meaning of which we shall never be able to comprehend, till we are swallowed up in the vision and fruition of God in heaven. “ I pray for them, that they all may
 “ be one, as thou Father art in me, and I
 “ in thee, that they also may be one in us.
 “ And the glory which thou gavest me, I
 “ have given them, that they may be one
 “ even as we are one: I in them, and
 “ thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one *.” Now, what sweet, what satisfying, what extatic pleasures must those be which result from this union with Christ ! O who would not wish to be thus present with the Lord ? But I must add a word or two,

4thly, Concerning the duration of their felicity. They shall be with the Lord, not a month only, or a year, or a thousand years ; but for ever. No change shall pass on their happiness, except that it shall be continually increasing. The sun that enlightens that world shall never lose one ray of its glory, nor ever be eclipsed by

* John xvii. 21, 22, 23.

one interposing cloud. The capacities of the saints shall suffer no decay, nor their relish for the pleasures of Paradise in the least abate. Their persons, their honours, their work, their joys, shall all be immortal. The kingdom that shall be given them shall never be moved. Not all the powers of hell shall be able to shake the foundations of it, or to excite in their breasts the most distant apprehension of their ever being dispossessed of it. Their crowns shall always shine upon their heads, and their sceptres always flourish in their hands; their thrones shall be fixed and eternal. So that when millions of years have rolled round, it will be still true of them, that they are beginning their bliss, just entering on their reign.

And now, having taken a distant view of the happiness which the Christian hath in prospect, I proceed,

II. To consider the period at which this happiness will commence: and that is, the very instant death has passed upon him —
 “ absent from the body, and present with
 “ the

“ the Lord.” The moment the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, he shall be clothed upon with his house which is from heaven.

There are some, indeed, who postpone the happiness of the saints to the morning of the resurrection; and suppose that the soul, in the interval between death and that time, remains in a state of unconsciousness and inactivity. A notion this, which appears to me to have no foundation in reason or the word of God. The soul is of a very different nature from the body: it hath none of the properties of body belonging to it. It is at present united to the body, and acts upon it; of which every one is sensible. But by what secret band it is united to the body, and in what manner it acts upon it, we can none of us say. It is certain also, that at death it ceases to animate the body: it departs out of it (to use our common mode of speech), and leaves it in the same cold, lifeless, inactive state, as the earth on which we tread. But surely this union, be it what it may, is not of such a nature as
 that,

that, when it ceases, it should be followed with the dissolution of the two constituent parts of man, the soul and body, which were thus united. As to the body, we know that that does not cease to exist; and why should we suppose that the soul ceases to exist? But it will be said, by some who hold the opinion I am here opposing, that they do not affirm the soul ceases to exist, but that it discontinues its operations, and sinks into a totally inactive state, in which it remains till the day of the resurrection. But how the idea of its absolutely ceasing for any term to think, will, reflect, or be conscious of any thing that is past, present, or to come, is reconcilable with its existence, I am at a loss to imagine. Or, if its existence will consist with this state of total insensibility, it will I think follow from thence, that the soul may, for aught there is in it to the contrary, remain in that state as well for a million as a thousand years: not to say that, upon this hypothesis, the arguments in favour of the immortality of the soul, arising from its immateriality, lose all their effect.

Truth

Truth I know wherever it lies ought to be pursued, be its consequences what they may : I cannot, however, help taking notice here how very disagreeable an effect this notion must have upon the minds of good men, and how ill a tendency with respect to bad men. As to the former, it cannot surely but cast a gloom over the mind of that man, whose chief pleasure consists in intellectual and devout exercises of the soul, to be told that, from the time he dies to the day of the resurrection, his enjoyments shall be totally intredicted, and he shall be as if he had never existed. Nor will the consideration, that the two points between the soul's falling asleep and awaking must, to its own apprehension, be united ; I say this consideration will scarce be effectual to relieve his spirits of the sadness which this gloomy prospect must needs occasion. And as to the wicked, though they are told that at the general resurrection they will be called to an account for their sins, and be punished accordingly ; I fear the idea of their being without any consciousness for so long a period, as that between death and the last judgment, will have

have an unhappy effect to soothe, if not totally suppress, those feelings which have a direct tendency to check men in their vicious courses.

But it is the Bible that must determine this point: nor can I find in that sacred book, any real countenance given to the notion I am opposing; on the contrary, it speaks, I think, strongly and clearly in favour of a separate state. Our Saviour manifestly takes this doctrine for granted in the parable of Dives and Lazarus: and he plainly asserts it in his words to the penitent thief on the cross; "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise*." The Apostle's ardent wish "to depart and be with Christ, which," he tells the Philippians, "is far better than to continue here†;" methinks very sufficiently decides the point. But our text is, if possible, still more fully to the purpose. "We are confident and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." What plain reader would not conclude from this passage, that the soul of a good man, as soon as he dies,

* Luke xxiii. 43.

† Philip. i. 23.

passes unto a state of perfect happiness with God in heaven? And to say, that this was only the privilege of the Apostles, and some few of the first disciples of Jesus, and that it extends not to Christians in general; is to speak without the authority of scripture, no intimation of this sort being anywhere given us in that sacred book.

You see then that death is the period at which the happiness I have been describing commences. And O how should this reconcile us to death, and to those many circumstances which often render the decline of life uncomfortable and distressing! You are, Christian, it may be, at the eve of eternal joys. — Let us now,

III. Consider the grounds on which the faith and hope of a Christian are built, with respect to all this happiness. The *Confidence* of which the Apostle here speaks may refer both to the firm belief of the reality of a future state of happiness, and to the blessed assurance which he and other Christians of those times possessed, as to their own personal right and title to it.

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We

We shall therefore briefly inquire into the proper evidences of both the one and the other. And,

1st. As to the reality of a future state. My time will not allow me to consider particularly the many probable arguments in favour of this great truth, arising from that eager desire of immortality which is deeply implanted in every breast; from the promiscuous dispensations of rewards and punishments in the present life; from the difficulty of accounting for many events in the history of this world, without supposing them to bear some relation to another scene of action beyond the line of time; and from the general opinion that has obtained among mankind, that death does not put an end to their existence. I speak to those who believe the scriptures to be the word of God; and shall therefore rest the whole upon the testimony of the bible. And there we have the fullest satisfaction upon the matter we can desire.

From intimations given us in the epistle to the Hebrews, it should seem that the
Patriarchs

Patriarchs had a lively faith of a future state of blessedness. They sought a better country than this, that is an heavenly; and looked for a city that hath foundations whose builder and maker is God*. Job knew that his Redeemer lived, and that after the present life he should see God†. Moses had respect to the recompence of reward‖. David rejoiced in the hope of beholding the face of God in righteousness, and being satisfied with his likeness; and assures us that there is most certainly a reward for the righteous, and a God that judgeth in the earth§. Daniel tells us that many who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt¶. But, in the New Testament “life and immortality are brought to light,” that is, made more clear and plain than they were under the former dispensation. Our Saviour, who had the words of eternal life, every where teaches this great doctrine in the fullest and most express terms. “The pure in heart,” says he, “shall see God‡.”

* Heb. xi. 10, 16. † Job xiv. 25, 26. ‖ Heb. xi. 26.

§ Ps. xvii. 15. lviii. 11. ¶ Dan. xii. 2. ‡ Matth. v. 8.

“ The righteous shall shine forth as the
 “ sun in the kingdom of their Father *.”
 “ Fear not, little flock ; for it is your Fa-
 “ ther’s good pleasure to give you the
 “ kingdom †.” “ Lazarus,” he tells us
 in the parable, “ died, and was carried by
 “ the angels into Abraham’s bosom §.”
 And a little before his last sufferings, he
 assures his disciples, that “ in his Father’s
 “ house there were many mansions, and
 “ that he was going before to prepare a
 “ place for them ‡.” To which I will on-
 ly add, that in his last prayer he thus au-
 thoritatively expresses himself ; “ I will
 “ that those whom thou hast given me,
 “ be with me where I am, to behold my
 “ glory ||.” And then as to the Apostles,
 you well know how largely they insist
 upon this most animating and important
 doctrine, in their discourses and epistles ;
 assuring us, that “ the blessed God, who
 “ cannot lie, promised eternal life before
 “ the world began ; that he graciously con-
 “ firmed his promise by an oath ; and that
 “ he put the performance of it beyond all

* Matth. xiii. 43. † Luke xii. 32. § Ch. xvi. 22.

‡ John xiv. 2, 3. || Ch. xvii. 24.

“ dispute,

“ dispute, by the resurrection of his own
 “ son from the dead *.” Moreover, they
 bring heaven near to our view, by a variety
 of the most expressive and striking figures ;
 describing it as “ a hope laid up for the
 “ Christian in that better world ; as the
 “ inheritance of the saints in light ; as a
 “ rest that remaineth for the people of
 “ God ; a kingdom that cannot be moved ;
 “ a crown of righteousness ; and a far
 “ more exceeding and eternal weight of
 “ glory †.”

The certainty then of this future state of
 happiness is no longer to be questioned,
 if these assurances of it be fairly proved to
 come from God. And of this we have
 every kind of evidence that can be reason-
 ably desired ; such evidence as is adapted
 to carry the fullest conviction upon the
 mind of every sober inquirer. Here there-
 fore, I might represent to you the antiqui-
 ty, purity, excellence and sublimity of the
 sacred records ; the wonderful facts there-

* Tit. i. 2. Heb. vi. 17. 1 Pet. i. 3, 4.

† Col. i. 5, 12. Heb. iv. 9. Chap. xii. 28. 2 Tim.
 iv. 8. 2 Cor. iv. 17.

in related, such as the miracles, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, all supported by the most natural and convincing testimony; the prophecies of the bible, their exact accomplishment, and the fulfilment of some of them in our own times; the amazing spread of the gospel, and the admirable effects it hath produced in the hearts and lives of men; the character of the sacred writers, who as they affirmed they were divinely inspired, so appear to have been persons of upright minds, and holy and unblameable lives; men who boldly withstood the prevailing passions and prejudices of the times, exposed themselves to the greatest inconveniences and distresses for the sake of the truth, and many of them sealed it with their blood. And to all this I might add the very sufficient proof we have, that these assurances of a future state have been preserved uncorrupt through the worst of times, and are truly conveyed down to us. We know then, by a kind of evidence which amounts to moral certainty, and which leaves every one who rejects it without excuse, that he who fears God, when he is absent from the body, is

present with the Lord.—But the main inquiry is,

2dly. By what criterions we may judge of our own personal title to a future state of happiness? I say main inquiry, because it is to be feared that many, who admit all that hath been said of another world to be true, have yet no sufficient grounds to conclude that the bliss and glory of it are prepared for them. To the examination therefore of our state towards God it behoves us to address ourselves, with the greatest attention and seriousness. Sad indeed it will be, should our hope be found another day to have deceived us! And, without a good hope through grace, it is strange to me how a man, if he be in his senses, can have any tolerable enjoyment of himself.

Now, it has been, and still is, the happiness of some to be able to say, in the language of the text, that they are confident of this very thing, that, when they shall be absent from the body, they shall be present with the Lord. Such was the felicity

city of the Apostle, and of those to whom the passage on which I am discoursing was immediately directed. They possessed that meetness for heaven which is common to all real Christians, and from whence we are warranted to infer our right to it. And besides this, they were favoured with an extraordinary and supernatural testimony from above of their interest in the joys of heaven. To the former, of which I shall speak more particularly hereafter, the Apostle refers, when he says, verse 5th, "He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing, is God:" and to the latter, when he adds in the same verse, "who hath also given unto us the earnest of the spirit." In much the same manner he expresses himself, chap. i. ver. 22d, of this epistle, where he says, "God hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the spirit in our hearts." They had such deep impressions made upon their breasts of the love of God to them in Jesus Christ, and such bright discoveries of the glories of the invisible state, as put their title to everlasting happiness beyond all dispute. And this favour was vouchsafed them, it is reasonable

sonable to suppose, in consideration of the very great difficulties and trials to which a profession of the true religion exposed them. And the effect was answerable to the merciful intention of a good and gracious God: for, thus happily released from those gloomy doubts and fears which sometimes distress and embarrass us in our Christian course, they rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory; and, realizing the heavenly inheritance as their own, they were inspired with a firmness of mind, which made them superior to the frowns and flatteries of the present world.

Nor are we to suppose that this was a privilege peculiar to primitive times. The like privilege some good men, in every age, have been favoured with on special and extraordinary occasions. And, were we so attentive to the means of religion as we ought to be, there are promises in the word of God that would warrant our expectation of much brighter hopes and joys, than those we are too apt to be contented with. But it is by no means to be concluded from what has been said, that assurance is

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essential

essential to faith. A real Christian who, to use the words of the Apostle, hath “ a “ good hope through grace*,” may yet, through various causes, be oppressed with many discouraging fears and jealousies as to his future state. This the scriptures authorize me to say. For so much is certainly implied in that question of the Prophet, “ Who is among you that feareth the “ Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath “ no light? Let him trust in the name of “ the Lord, and stay upon his God†.” And upon this supposition it is the feeble-minded, and the weak in faith, are recommended to our tender compassion; and we are exhorted to lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees||. Let not therefore the humble, diffident, Christian hastily conclude, that he shall not at death be present with the Lord, because he cannot say, that he knows in himself it will be so. And here, you will give me leave to observe on the other hand, that there have been those who have wrought them-

* 2 Thes. ii. 16. † Isa. l. 10. || 1 Thes. v. 14.
 Heb. xii. 12.

selves up into a confident persuasion of their interest in the special favour of God, whose tempers and conduct have given others too just cause to apprehend their pretences were vain and delusive. Wherefore great caution is to be used in distinguishing between the warm and hasty fallies of unhallowed passions, and the prevailing inclinations and tendencies of a renewed mind.

What, then, are the ordinary and proper evidences of a man's title to the heavenly blessedness? For a reply to this question we must have recourse to the holy scriptures, in which these evidences are laid down in very clear, full and satisfactory terms. The only difficulty is, to bring ourselves aright to this test, that is, so to try ourselves by it, as to avoid the extremes of self-flattery on the one hand, and unreasonable severity on the other. Now here it is to be observed, that as mankind are in a guilty fallen state, and as it is through the sacrifice and righteousness of Christ alone that sinners are reconciled to God; so, by the constitution of the gospel, faith and repentance are necessary to

salvation. The two first great questions, therefore, to be put to ourselves are these, Have I with all my heart believed in the Lord Jesus Christ? And, have I truly and ingenuously repented of all my sins? If, upon a serious examination of ourselves, we can answer in the affirmative to these questions, we have undoubtedly a title to the heavenly blessedness. But, as the Apostle is speaking in this context of a certain meetness for heaven, from whence resulted that confidence which the primitive Christians possessed as to their title to it; it may be proper here to inquire, in a few words, Wherein that meetness consists?

“ He that hath wrought us for the self-
 “ same thing,” says he, “ is God.” As
 if he had said, “ The blessed God hath,
 “ of his mercy, and by the gracious in-
 “ fluence of his Spirit, moulded us into a
 “ temper suited to the better world. We
 “ are willing to be absent from the body,
 “ and wish to be present with the Lord:
 “ and from the prevalence of these desires
 “ in our breasts, and their effect on our
 “ lives, as well as from the earnest of the
 “ Spirit which he hath given us, we con-

“clude that at death we shall be happy.”
Would we, then, know whether we are the heirs of future bliss and glory? let us proceed in the examination of ourselves by the same measures.

How stand we affected, in the first place, to the present world? It is not necessary that we should lose all relish for the innocent enjoyments of life; that we should lay aside the business of our callings, withdraw ourselves from society, and retire into a wilderness. It is not necessary that we should be so out of humour with the body, as to neglect making a prudent provision for its support: “no man,” says the Apostle, “ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it*.” Nor is it necessary, however desirable, that a reluctance to death should be totally extirpated from our nature. But surely it is necessary, if we are real Christians, that we have a higher relish for the pleasures of religion, than any worldly enjoyments whatever; that we feel greater anxiety, and a more intense concern, about the one thing needful,

* Eph. v. 29.

than about our most important temporal interests ; and that we prefer the health of the soul to that of the body. And, you easily see that these tempers are totally inconsistent with a lawless gratification of bodily appetites, with a greedy, avaritious pursuit of the world, and with an allowed omission of religious duties, or an indolent heartless performance of them. Do we, then, endeavour to restrain and regulate the appetites and passions of nature ? And, reflecting that the body is too often an occasion of sin, do we on that account wish to be absent from it, as well as because of the pains and disorders we may sometimes endure ? Have we a sovereign contempt for the world, when it dares dispute the preeminence in our breasts with that love we feel to the blessed God, and the infinitely adorable Saviour ? And do we express our indifference to the world, by enjoying the comforts of it with moderation, by enduring the afflictions of it with patience, and by generously contributing according to our abilities, to the advancement of religion, and the good of our fellow-creatures ? Are we impelled to the duties of piety and devotion,

not

not merely by the dictates of conscience, and a slavish dread of the consequence of neglecting them; but by a firm persuasion of their utility and importance, and an eager thirst after heavenly and divine blessings? If this be the case, I may venture to affirm, that when we are absent from the body, we shall be present with the Lord.

But, we may carry our inquiries still further, and ask ourselves, How our hearts and affections are disposed to that better world I have been describing? The employments and pleasures of it are, as you have seen, all pure and spiritual. “ No-
 “ thing that defileth can in any wise enter
 “ into the New Jerusalem, neither whatso-
 “ ever worketh abomination, or maketh a
 “ lie *.” Whoever is admitted there, must bid a final adieu not only to pain, disappointment and trouble, but to all irregular passions, vain and trifling discourse, and unworthy and sinful pursuits. Now, can we think with inward satisfaction and delight of spending an eternal duration, in contemplating the infinitely blessed God,

* Rev. xxi. 27.

his nature, perfections and works; in beholding the matchless glories of the divine Jesus; in conversing with the spirits of just men made perfect; and, in doing the will of our Father who is in heaven? If so, we may be assured, we have a right to enter in through the gates into the city. “He “ that hath wrought us for the self-same “ thing, is God.” Nor would he have thus made us meet, in our measure, to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, if he had not, of his grace, designed that inheritance for us. And now it remains,

IV. and Lastly, To inquire, what effect this confidence may and ought to have upon our temper and conduct?

Much, you are sensible, might be said here respecting the mighty influence of this divine hope to purify our hearts, to animate us to our duty, and to moderate our affections to the world. But, as these effects are of the same nature with those qualifications of a real Christian I have been just describing; it may suffice to observe, that
they

they will become more and more apparent and striking, as our faith and hope advance towards perfection. I must, however, take some more particular notice of that one happy fruit of an assured expectation of heaven, which appeared so conspicuously in the primitive Christians, and which is particularly referred to in this context, and that is, not only an acquiescence in affliction, but a holy exultation and triumph of soul amidst the severest outward troubles. And indeed, when we rightly consider it, it is so far from being strange that a man, with these glorious prospects before him, should become superior to the dread of poverty, persecution, and even death itself; that it is rather to be wondered at that the little things of the present life, should at all prove trials to the resolution of a real Christian. The true reason why we are so apt to faint in a time of adversity, is our walking more by sight than by faith. Did we look steadily to the things which are not seen, even to that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory which is laid up for us in heaven; our worldly afflictions would seem light and

momentary: though we were troubled on every side, we should not be distressed; though perplexed, not in despair; though persecuted, not forsaken; though cast down, not destroyed. It stands to reason that this would be the case: and fact abundantly confirms this reasoning.

The Old Testament worthies, as we learn from the eleventh chapter to the Hebrews, were not only reconciled to their afflictions by the hope of a future recompence of reward, but were wrought up to a degree of boldness and resolution, that excited the astonishment of all beholders. “ Through faith they subdued kingdoms, “ wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, “ quenched the violence of fire, escaped “ the edge of the sword, out of weakness “ were made strong, waxed valiant in “ fight, turned to flight the armies of the “ aliens: women received their dead raised “ to life again: and others were tortured, “ not accepting deliverance, that they “ might obtain a better resurrection. And “ others had trial of cruel mockings and “ scourgings,

“ scourgings, yea moreover of bonds and
 “ imprisonment; they were stoned, they
 “ were sawn asunder, were tempted, were
 “ slain with the sword; they wandered
 “ abroad in sheep’s skins and goat’s skins,
 “ being destitute, afflicted, tormented *.”

And the persecuted Hebrews themselves, to whom this account was more immediately given, for the encouragement of their faith; “ took joyfully the spoiling of
 “ their goods, knowing in themselves that
 “ they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance †.” The Apostles “ gloried
 “ in tribulations ‡ :” and the words of the text are the language of the sweetest serenity and pleasure, amidst the blackest storms of temporal adversity; “ We are
 “ confident, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present
 “ with the Lord.”

And, blessed be God! we are not without some instances of this sort in our own times. We have ourselves known and conversed with those, who have held the same language, in seasons of great outward

* Heb. xi. 33—37. † Ibid. x. 34. ‡ Rom. v. 3.

trouble, and in the near views of death. And it is no small pleasure to me, that, whilst I am sympathizing with the sorrowful relatives of our deceased friend, MRS. SUSANNA BRITTAIN, on which occasion I have been desired to discourse on these words; I say, it affords me no small pleasure, that I am authorized to say, such was her temper and language in the prospect of her approaching dissolution.

I had not the happiness of being intimately acquainted with her; but I am well assured by those who had, that she was a person of a sweet and amiable temper, formed by nature and grace to make those around her happy. In her early days, deeply impressed with the great things of God, she made a public profession of her faith in the Lord Jesus Christ: and, all through life, was an ornament to that profession; filling up every relation to the glory of God, and the credit of religion. Her tender sympathy with the afflicted; her love of peace, and solicitous endeavours to promote it; her kind disposition to put the most favourable construction upon the
words

words and actions of others; and her anxious concern to promote the interests of piety in her own family; were such fruits of real religion, as will, I doubt not, embalm her memory in the breasts of many to whom I speak: and, would to God! that in these respects, as well as others I might mention, we may all of us be disposed to imitate her amiable example.

It pleased God to visit her with a very long and painful illness, which nevertheless she bore with great patience and submission. During the course of it, being asked on a time, "How it was with her soul?" she expressed some doubt, not as to the ground of her confidence, "for Christ," said she, "has done all in point of merit; but how shall I know it was for me?" Upon, however, being reminded that what God had done in her, was an evidence of her interest in what Christ had merited for her, her doubts seemed to subside: and she afterwards declared, "That she was not afraid, but willing to die; that death had no horrors; and that she was ready to part with all, if that were the pleasure of
" God."

“ God.” Another time she said, addressing herself to the affectionate partner of her life, “ I think you, my dear, and “ others are too desirous of my life; it is “ cruel to pray for it.” And, upon his expressing his wish that she might have rest, meaning sleep; she added, “ I know there “ remaineth a rest for the people of God.” When her life was at any time prayed for, she seemed unhappy; but, when an easy passage was asked for her to a better world, she was all devotion, lifting up her hands and eyes to God. A few days before her decease, her speech began to fail her: she could, however, say, which she did with earnestness, “ His chariot-wheels are long “ a coming.” After this being asked, “ Whether she was comfortable?” she replied, “ Yes.” And, on the 29th of May in the evening, without a groan or struggle, she sweetly fell asleep in Jesus. A letter she left behind her to my worthy brother, her sorrowful relict, requesting him to give a sum, she mentions, to the poor, “ that “ they,” as she expresses it, “ may rejoice “ on earth, as I trust I shall in heaven, “ through the merits of my exalted Re-
“ deemer,

“ deemer, who, I believe, is gone before
 “ to prepare mansions of glory for you,
 “ my dear, and for me. O that blessed
 “ day,” adds she, “ when we shall meet
 “ above, to sing of redeeming grace and
 “ dying love !”

Such was the character, and such the exit of this excellent woman ! And, from her happy experience there results a fresh evidence in favour of religion, and of the reality of that divine influence which is exerted on the hearts of Christians, to prepare them for the heavenly state. May we all feel the force of this evidence, and enjoy the comfort of it ! Especially you, my dear brother, who are intimately concerned in this mournful providence ! Your loss is very great, and I most heartily join the rest of your friends in their tender sympathy with you. But, pungent as your sorrow is, I persuade myself, the abundant satisfaction you have as to the happy condition of our dear departed sister, and the good hope you possess, through grace, as to your own future state, will restrain and moderate your grief. I pray God, of his in-

finite mercy, to pour divine consolations into your afflicted breast; to inspire you with new vigour in your work; to add yet many more seals to your ministry; and, at a distant period, to crown your hopes and labours with distinguished joys and honours in the world above.

And, permit me to express my earnest wish, that this providence may be sanctified to you, my friends, who are come hither to pay this last respectful tribute to the memory of a pious and affectionate relative! Her face you will no more see in the flesh; but the benefit of her counsels, example, and prayers, you will, I hope, long enjoy. How can you, then, better express the real sorrow you feel for her removal hence, than by frequently calling up her amiable pattern to your view, and aiming to copy after it? So may you hope to enjoy that serenity and cheerfulness in the prospect of death, which, as you have heard, was her unspeakable felicity; and which I heartily pray may be yours.

May

May this instance of mortality, and what has been said on the occasion, have also a happy effect to awaken us all to a serious consideration of our future and eternal interests! Each of us must, ere long, take our leave of the body, or, to use the language of the text, be absent from it. And can we anticipate that great event in our thoughts, without being anxious to know what will become of our immortal spirits? Whither will they flee? To the realms of light and glory — or to the abodes of darkness and despair? What company will they join? The society of the blessed above — or that of damned spirits beneath? Will they be present with the Lord, to behold his glory — or be punished with everlasting destruction from his presence, and the glory of his power? The latter will most assuredly be the condition of all those, who neglect and despise the great salvation the Gospel reveals, and live in subjection to sin and the world. For how can it be expected, that God will extend his mercy to those, who are not sensible of their need of it; and who treat the means he has appointed for escaping the wrath to come with indifference, if

I

not

not contempt? O! no. “ There remain-
 “ eth no more sacrifice for sins, but a cer-
 “ tain fearful looking for of judgment, and
 “ fiery indignation, which shall devour the
 “ adversaries*.” Besides, if it would any
 way consist with the justice and goodness
 of God, notwithstanding all, to extend his
 mercy to such persons; still, it would be
 impossible for them to be happy in another
 world, unless their depraved spirits were re-
 newed, and a new bent given to their
 minds. O let me beseech you, sinners, to
 consider these things. Flee from the wrath
 to come, and lay hold on eternal life.
 “ Behold, now is the accepted time, be-
 “ hold, now is the day of salvation†.”
 Cast yourselves at the feet of divine mercy.
 Plead the sacrifice and merits of the Son of
 God. And O may you obtain forgiveness,
 and the gift of the Holy Spirit through
 him!

But I must not conclude, without con-
 gratulating the humble Christian on the
 joyful prospects before him. You are re-
 conciled to the idea of being absent from

* Heb. x. 26, 27. † 2 Cor. vi. 2.

the body : yea, I may add, there are circumstances which render that idea pleasing to you. You would be glad to be delivered from a body of sin and death. Well ! This will be your happiness ere long : and, more than this, you shall instantly be present with the Lord. O ravishing thought ! What heart can conceive a thousandth part of the bliss that is comprehended in this expression ! Give God the glory of these great hopes : live agreeable to them : and, O may they happily reconcile you to the troubles of the present state, and infuse a divine sweetness into all the comforts of it !

THE END.



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